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CONTENTS

THIS ISSUE

NEXUS DANCE CHART 46
GRAB A FRIEND (DRINK SPECIALS) 48
GRAB ROGER 50
GRAB HOLLY 52
GRAB A BOOK 54
GRAB EVENTS 60
GRAB EXHIBITS 62
Bar/Restaurant/ Directory/ 74 & 76
MAP 77
CLASSIFIEDS 78

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SWAY DISPENSARY 6

DJ LEO BLANCO 10

JIM FIELDING 14

PRIDE PARADE GRAND MARSHALS 18

HEATH HALO 56

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GRAB MAGAZINE

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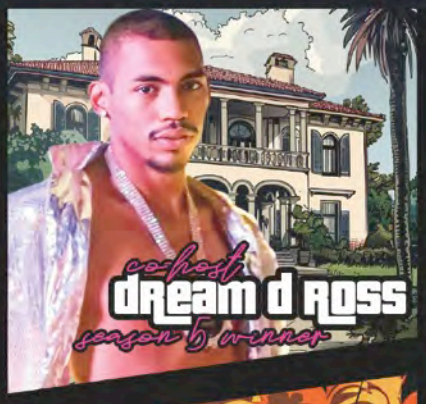

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Leading The Sway

Community Leaders Art Johnston and Pep Pena and Their Partners Edie Moore and Kevin Hauswirth Talk About Their New Marijuana Dispensary.

By Rick Karlin

More than five decades ago, two men walked into a bar; a teacher from a working-class neighborhood, and a Cuban refugee turned bartender. They fell in love and together opened what would become an iconic bar, co-founded an LGBTQ+ rights organization, and sparked a passion that helped establish a queer neighborhood.

Later in life, they met a woman, a Black veteran fighting for cannabis legalization and social equity. A love for good weed and a flare for fiery activism made for a match like no other. Together, they've created a new space for their communities – SWAY, a dispensary on Halsted that's rooted in the values that drive them in love and life. SWAY is the first queer – and BIPOC-owned dispensary in the state.

The owners, Art Johnston and Pepin Pena from Sidetrack and their partner Edie Moore, the first Executive Director of Chicago NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws) and co-founder and Principal Officer of SWAY dispensaries, along with investor Kevin Hauswirth, readily admit that it is built on the strong, sassy shoulders of those who came before. The queer rule-breakers who fought for medicinal weed as a remedy against HIV. The Black and Brown activists who broke down barriers to weed, despite bearing the brunt of over-criminalization and prosecution. It is part of a community that doesn't wait around for spaces to be created for us. We kick the doors down our own damn selves. Good thing we always wear our door-kicking shoes.

SWAY is a come-as-you-are, come-as-you've-always-wanted-to-be kind of place. It's for the neighborhood, for the visitors, for the first-timers, and the every-dayers. It's not just a dispensary or a store, it's a continuation of a long history of our communities fighting for cannabis equity and the right to love freely. SWAY is working to keep queer enclaves queer and more reflective of the world we want to live in. So, if you're not into it, that's fine, it's not for you, but if you are, you're welcome. Oh, and they sell weed. Really, good weed.

Rick Karlin: First, congratulations on opening SWAY. Perhaps the initial question on everyone's lips is, "Why?" Didn't you have enough to keep you busy at Sidetrack?
SWAY: Some 40 years ago, Pep turned to me and said "wouldn't it be great if we could sell weed instead of booze." We laughed and never thought anything of it… until legalization passed in Illinois. SWAY is the logical next step for the work we've tried to do for years for justice, equity, and vibrant communities. Northalsted is one of the few remaining queer enclaves in the country. Our survival depends on owning our own spaces.

R.K: Your website and the store's décor, displays information on heroes in our communities' histories. Why was that important to you?
SWAY: The price our communities paid for legal weed was too high a cost. For LGBTQ folks, cannabis was medicine helping those suffering from AIDS. But for communities of color, the toll of

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racist policies and over-criminalization continues to this day. Recognizing those who have come before us and those doing the work today is the only reason we're where we are now.

R.K: SWAY is one of the few businesses on Northalsted to be owned by a conglomerate of LGBT, BIPOC, and veterans. And your staff is representative of that same population. Why is that important to you?
SWAY: The SWAY team is representative of the communities we share and hope to serve. We want to create spaces that are reflective of the world we want to live in. And one thing that really links the owners together is a shared vision for what progress looks like.

R.K: How much pushback did you face from the city and/or the neighborhood when you proposed opening a dispensary?
SWAY: The neighborhood could not have been more supportive, and I'm still blown away by the warm welcome we're getting from our neighbors. When we hosted a community meeting, someone stood up and expressed how excited they are to have a space where they can walk in and feel safe regardless of who they are or how they look. We try every day to live up to that.

R.K: SWAY takes the place of the old Town Hall Pub, which was a sort of landmark until it closed during the COVID pandemic. While the new place looks fantastic (Full disclosure, the writer's brother-in-law's construction company built the dispensary), will we see anything harkening back to Town Hall?
SWAY: We were also saddened to hear about Bill's passing and are so grateful to MaryJo (his widow) wanting to honor Town Hall by creating a new welcoming space in the community. Aside from the iconic exposed brick and paneled roof, we hope to honor Town Hall's legacy of hospitality and a come-as-you-are atmosphere… and we may just have a few other ideas brewing. Stay tuned.

RK: Do you see a chain of SWAY dispensaries opening, or will this one location expand to incorporate the entire block, a la Sidetrack?
SWAY: Our friend and business partner, Edie Moore, has wonderful plans for a second SWAY in her South Shore neighborhood. She has been a longtime advocate for access to safe, legal cannabis no matter where you live. While she'll certainly design the space to reflect and respect the local community, our shared values of representation, advocacy and hospitality will shine through.

R.K: Finally, do you ever foresee the day when there are marijuana bars?
SWAY: When folks can come in and order an Animal Face pre-rolled or an Afghani Skunk blunt, and maybe watch a show tune? Forty years ago, we never dreamed of walking into a shop to buy weed legally... so who knows what other dreams could come true?! In the meantime, we'll be making infused cocktails at home!

SWAY is located at 3340 N Halsted. Visit them online at ***http:www.everybodysway.com***

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GRAB A DJ

DJ Leo Blanco spins at Furball

By Tom Olah

Leo has performed as resident DJ at ***Privilege*** (Ibiza) the world´s biggest venue and played in a big variety of clubs and festivals around the world as The Week (Sao Paulo), We Party (Madrid), GSP (Los Angeles), I:M Party (Seoul), Latin american Pride (Mexico City), Purple Party (Dallas), Destination (Beijing), Score (Miami), Deja-Vu (Sydney), Theatron (Bogota), Formosa Pride (Taipei), Gibus (Paris), Muccassasina (Rome), MEAT (New York), Beyond (London), NY Club (Munich)... and next stop ***Furball*** in Chicago during memorial day weekend.

Leo took time out of his busy schedule to sit down with Grab to answer a few questions.

Tom Olah: How did you first get into DJing? What were your first gigs like?
Leo Blanco: It's been awhile but I first got interested in DJing from watching other DJs during my clubbing days. I've always loved music and was super excited and intrigued to know how it felt to spin in a DJ booth.

TO: Do you have a connection to Chicago? Have you spun here before? Are you excited to spin here? Any special Chicago vibe?
LB: Chicago was one of the first cities I played in US and one of my favorites. Chicago is also the home of House Music Frankie Knuckles, Derrick Carter. So there:s that as well as being super special for me to spin during such a major weekend like IML.

TO: What type of music do you spin? Do you spin for gay or mixed crowds? Are they different?
LB: I have different styles depending on the crowd. When I spin for Furball, I play more House and Tech House. When I'm requested for Circuit festivals or events, I play more Circuit and when I'm in one of my monthly residences as Mantamar in Puerto Vallarta, I deliver Afro House because this is a beach club in front of the sea and a day party, so I understand the type of vibe and music for a beach resort spot.

TO: What DJ influenced you? Who do you like now?
LB: I have had several DJs and producers who have influenced me, most of them from House Music.

TO: Have you spun at IML before? Do you have a connection to the leather community?
LB: Nope. This will be my first time, and I am very excited!

TO: What have been some of your favorite gigs?
LB: Last year, Purple Party in Dallas, Formosa Pride in Taiwan, Furball in New York, Jungle in Sao Paulo or

Mantamar Pride in Puerto Vallarta, to mention some of them.

TO: What's it like being a straight DJ in the gay club world?
LB: For me, there are no difference between gay or straight people. I play for people and make them dance and feel happy for a couple of hours independent of their sexual orientation.

TO: How do you see your night spinning Furball IML, What has been your experience spinning for Furball?
LB: Always when I play for Furball, it is special for me and a challenge because I play all night long from open to close. So it's a journey which I really love to feel. I have mostly spun for Furball in New York. This time, being in Chicago during IM, I think will be different because there will be people from all over the country. I can't wait to be there.

TO: Anything else?
LB: Thanks for the interview and see you all at Furball IML edition for a real journey.

You can catch Leo at Furball on Saturday night, May 25, 11:30 p.m. to 5 a.m., at Metro, 3730 N. Clark, 11:30 p.m. to 5 a.m. Tickets are available at www.metrochicago.com

GRAB AARON

Glam-rock folk-singer Aaron Lee Tasjan's "Stellar" achievement

By Gregg Shapiro

An early contender for one of the best albums of 2024, "Stellar Evolution" (Blue Élan) by queer singer/songwriter Aaron Lee Tasjan is modern pop perfection. For his captivating and varied fourth, full-length solo album (available on orange vinyl!), Tasjan expertly navigates meaningful subject matter in songs that reveal something new with every listen. From the accessible experimentation of "The Drugs Did Me" and "Alien Space Queen," to the new wave nods "Horror Of It All," and "Dylan Shades," to club banger "Nightmare" and gorgeous numbers including "Young" and "Ocean Drive," Tasjan never fails to keep us mesmerized and enchanted. Aaron was generous enough to make time for an interview before the album was released.

Gregg Shapiro: Aaron, if you don't mind, I'd like to begin with something from your musical past, your membership in the band Semi Precious Weapons. I was aware of SPW because I had interviewed Justin Tranter early in his career as a solo artist. When you look back on your time with that band, what do you recall about the experience?

Aaron Lee Tasjan: It was a great experience for me. I was much younger than everyone else in the group. I had been going to the Berklee College of Music in Boston and Nate at Rear Window Recording in Boston had recorded some of Justin's solo records. He was the one who suggested that Justin and I get together. Obviously, Justin would have their own perspective on this and everything, but from my vantage, it was when the two of us came together that the crux of Semi Precious Weapons was formed. The song "Rock'n'Roll Never Looked So Beautiful" and the eponymous Semi Precious Weapons song were all songs that Justin and I wrote together. In the early days that was kind of what the band centered around; the songs we were writing together. I left the group in 2008 right before the debut record came out on (the) Razor & Tie (label). I left for personal reasons that had had more to do with the romantic relationship that Justin and I had had than anything to do with the band. Obviously, those kinds of things get messy and complicated sometimes. But what I feel was a good thing, and continues to be a good thing, about our relationship is that at no point in time did we ever, or at least I never felt, any animosity towards him. I've always had the most tremendous respect for Justin as an artist, and as a songwriter, and always will. I will say to this day, Justin is one of the most talented songwriters I've ever met in my entire life. I've gotten lucky to know a few great ones, and they are one of the very best.

GS: Gregory Lattimer, with whom you co-produced your new album "Stellar Evolution," also co-wrote two of the songs – "The Drugs Did Me" and "Horror of it All." What makes him a good collaborator?

***ALT*:** A lot of times when I am co-writing on songs for my record, I'm really coming to my co-writer with a fairly fleshed-out song. I'm kind of asking them to cross my Ts and dot my Is, anything that I might have

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missed, anything that seems unclear, any of those kinds of things that can be helpful to have an outside perspective on. One of the things that makes Gregory so great in particular is his ability to add something. And this is why I would consider what he's doing just as much songwriting as production. To me, if you add something to my song, or make a suggestion about my song even, that changes the way that I perform it every time I do it, that's songwriting. On "The Drugs Did Me," for example, the original demo of that song is just me on an acoustic guitar, it sounds completely different than how it ended up on the record. It almost sounds like a Nick Lowe song from 1978 or something, the way that I had done it originally. Gregory was hearing more with the sort of 808 thing and pulled that up. As we were going through it, it felt more natural to start talking the lyrics, more like a talking blues kind of thing. In just making that little suggestion, he influenced the whole approach that I was taking to even performing this song. To me, that felt like songwriting. I was compelled to credit him as a songwriter because he was changing not just a little thing about the sound of the song in the studio or something like that, but literally changing the way that I was even performing the song based on the way that he was hearing it. I think that's a special thing too because it's not as if he's going, "OK, I'm going to do my thing on this or my sound on this," or whatever. It's much more transparent than that and allows me to retain my autonomy as the artist, while at the same time helping me to get into a place that I hadn't been before. He's a very crucial collaborator in that way because what he does is transparent enough that the essence of me as an artist still is shining through, but it's helping push me and push my music into places that I haven't been before. That always feels exciting to me.

GS: Speaking of collaborations, you and Nashville legend Kim Richey co-wrote the song "Bird" on "Stellar Evolution" and then you also perform on Kim's upcoming new album "Every New Beginning." Please say a few words about why you and Kim work well together.

Photo By Shervin Lainez

ALT: Kim is another one, like Justin (Tranter), who is one of the very finest singers and songwriters I've encountered in my time. We have the Ohio connection, which is groovy. That was cool to find out. Funny enough, we were across the alley neighbors in Nashville. I was a huge fan and didn't even realize she lived over there. One day she was packing some stuff into her truck to go to a gig or something, and my friend who was visiting at my house recognized her. She said, "Oh my God, I think that's Kim Richey." I was like, "No way, that's not Kim Richey!" And she went over there and said, "I'm so sorry to bother you [laughs] but are you by any chance Kim Richey?" Of course, it was! We started becoming neighborly at first, taking each other's mail in and that kind of thing. I wanted so badly to write with her, but I was nervous to to suggest that for whatever reason. Luckily for me, she did at one point say, "Let's write some songs together." Part of the reason that we work well together is a very natural sense of who we are as artists. I think when not overthinking that part of it and being, "I'm this kind of artist and therefore have to do this and that and be creative in these specific ways," it opens you up to collaboration in a way that can be fruitful. When it's with someone like Kim, who's an endless stream of incredible melodies and beautiful, poignant, harmony, and lyricism, you would want to be open to receiving as much of that as you possibly can as a collaborator. The fact that we're both grounded in who we are helps us bring out the best in each other.

GS: Earlier I mentioned "Horror Of It All," which perfectly encapsulates the complexity of adolescence, while also managing to maintain a sense of humor. To my ears, it sounds like a message of reassurance for those of us who experienced something similar, while also being a kind of gentle cautionary tale for the next generation. In other words, you are not alone, no matter your age. Am I on the right track?

ALT: Definitely! I knew from a very young age, as a lot of us do, that I was a queer person. That I was a little different that way than some of my classmates. Sometimes those first experiences that you have as a young person, when you're a queer person there's that added layer of…

GS: …drama.

ALT: Drama! Right? There's no other way to say it. It is what it is. You don't know what can happen on a day-to-day basis, especially in an environment like school. I remember being at summer camp,

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Photo By Shervin Lainez

when I was eight or nine years old, and my friend Hayden Stewart and I were just friends, but we were oftentimes walking around holding hands at camp, which I didn't think anything of as an eight-or-nine-year-old. But the older kids in camp were merciless about making fun of us for it. It wasn't even anything romantic. I suppose I probably internalized it even deeper knowing that I was attracted to the other boys [laughs]. This has an added sting to it because there was an underlying truth that I haven't even really been able to tell anybody about myself. I was also trying to capture some of the feeling of what it's like to grow up as a person in an environment like school where you are a little different and there are those added layers of complexity to all your social interactions and tap into that a little bit. But as you were saying, it is still a very universal sort of feeling in that way and something that, in one way or another, we all experience in life.

GS: "Nightmare" is a full-fledged dance floor banger. What would it mean to you to become a disco diva and to have the song spun at tea dance?

ALT: Oh my God, that would be amazing [laughs]! That would be one of the greatest things that I could possibly imagine. I love the club scene. I love dancing. There are some great places here in Nashville to go and do that and be a part of that scene. That's probably one of my most treasured memories from my time in New York in my 20s. Getting to be a part of that scene. Going to Michael T's parties and being a part of that whole amazing scene. There's nothing like it. The infectiousness and energy of queer joy in those spaces is so powerful. If that song somehow became [laughs] one of those, I would be for thrilled to death.

GS: "The Drugs Did Me" is both sonically daring and as incredibly personal as "Horror Of It All," in the way that it addresses your quest for sobriety. Can you please say something about your approach to the subject?

ALT: In 2018, I had a medical incident while I was on tour where I lost consciousness for a period of time. I had to go to the emergency room. I didn't even realize what had happened until the next morning because I was taking very little into my body that were things my body could use. [Laughs] (Putting) a lot of things into my body that were creating problems for me. I saw several different kinds of doctors, trying to get a full grip on what was happening and what I had to do to course correct and all those things. In the process of that, I asked myself, "Do you want to be an artist and a singer or do you want to be a person that just parties all the time?" The choice at that point was very clear to me. I knew that I wanted to be an artist and a singer more than anything in the world. That's what I've wanted to do since I was 11 years old. In that moment, I couldn't believe that I allowed myself to lose track of that. That seems like such an important thing to remember and focus on. In the process of being on the road all the time and wanting to enjoy it, I maybe went a little far down the wrong road there for a little while [laughs], I think. It's funny, I don't think I ever could have written that song when I was doing all that. I had to stop and take a couple of years to get a full perspective on what was happening there. Almost every line of that song is straight out of direct personal experience.

GS: "I Love America Better Than You" is the serious/comic anthem we all need, especially in this most important election of our lifetime. Would you say this is the most political song you've ever written?

ALT: I would say so, definitely. It took a long time to write, too. I started writing it in 2015. I thought that I'd finished the song. As the next [laughs] administration and all that played out, I realized that there was a lot more that I needed to say in that song, and fleshed the song out so that each chorus was completely different. In that way it kind of became, form-wise I suppose, a more traditional kind of protest song, if you will. The protest thing is tricky. If you think of a song like "Ohio" by Neil Young, for

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example, or something like that, I think that song is a successful protest song in that it felt timely, certainly when it came out, but there are things in that song that still relate to what we're living through today. That's always the challenge of writing a song like that. The balance I was trying to walk with "I Love America Better Than You" was to create something that… it's part of why I wanted to reference my dad being a Vietnam veteran, to show that these issues we're facing in America we've been facing for a long time, we're still facing them today. We need to you know find ways to rise to those challenges as best we can. The song is certainly meant in that Mark Twain kind of observational way. Delivering a message about America that maybe speaks to more of the harder truth and complexities that exist within the fabric of our country. But also trying to do that in a way that is conscious of the fact that if we want to change someone's mind we have to do it through love. That's the only real way to change the way that someone thinks about something. I was trying to strike that balance.

GS: Like they used to say, "Hearts and minds." In what ways, if any, are you doing your part to make sure your fans understand the significance of this election?

ALT: Here in Nashville, where I'm a resident, we're going to have the Please Vote Nashville folks out at our on May 2nd that we're doing at The Blue Room to try and encourage people to vote. What I keep telling people over and over again, for anyone who may not have thought about this yet, is living in the South I've watched over the course of the Donald Trump administration, people who do have an agenda of bigotry and hatred feel very emboldened to go a long way to pass laws to make it illegal to be a gay person. And drag bans and all of these things that are blatant and open. What I keep saying is, if they feel that way now, imagine how they would feel having Trump get reelected. I imagine that they would feel even more emboldened to go even further with this kind of stuff. It wasn't long ago that we were sitting in our house in East Nashville watching a parade of Nazis walk down the street in downtown Nashville on the news. And there was zero police presence. There were more police on hand to watch the mothers of the Covenant School shooting in the statehouse than there were on hand for this parade of Nazis who marched all the way up to the State House and had a little shindig on the steps. It's heartbreaking in a lot of ways. That's one of my biggest things with people. I understand where folks and particularly young folks, don't always feel 100 percent satisfied with the way Biden is handling certain things. I think there is a duty that we have to each other, living in a society together, to be looking out for the ones who are marginalized. For the ones who the hammer that falls is going to come down on the hardest. A vote to keep Donald Trump out of office is a vote against all that bigotry, hatred, and messaging.

Photo By Shervin Lainez

GS: Finally, your rendition of the late Nanci Griffith's "Late Night Grande Hotel" on the tribute album "More Than a Whisper: Celebrating the Music of Nanci Griffith," which features guest vocals by Patty Griffin, is nothing short of breathtaking. Did you have a chance to meet Nanci in Nashville?

ALT: I never did. However, the person who introduced me to Nanci's music was Elizabeth Cook. Elizabeth toured with Nanci several times and had a relationship with her. In a way, it was exactly the kind of person who you would want to be showing you that music. I spent time with Elizabeth, and we even worked up a couple of Nanci's songs that we were singing together in 2014, 2015. Hearing these first-hand accounts from Elizabeth about being on the road with Nanci, and working with Nanci, and watching Nanci, and all those things; I got an inside look at it. I also was lucky to be managed by Ken Levitan and Kathi Whitley at Vector Management for a long time, and they had worked very closely with Nanci, as well. I had a lot of folks around me who knew her and had known her for a long time. I knew some of the bigger songs that she had done but when I started diving into her catalog… I'll never forget it, it was 2015 I was in Grimey's Records in Nashville, and I found a used copy of the album "Little Love Affairs" on vinyl. I took it home and obsessed over that record for probably that whole year [laughs]. That was probably what I listened to more than anything. Nanci is one of those that when you find her you just buckle up and go as far as the ride will take you. That voice and those songs: there's nothing like it.

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GRAB JIM

"All Pride" parade: an interview with Jim Fielding

By Gregg Shapiro

The title of Jim Fielding's memoir, "All Pride, No Ego: A Queer Executive's Journey to Living and Leading Authentically" (Wiley, 2023), tells you almost everything you need to know. A queer business leader for more than 30 years, Fielding has worked for some of the most highly recognizable companies in today's world and is currently the president of Co-Lab at Archer Gray, in addition to being a brand strategist and advisor. However, what sets Fielding's story apart is that it is told from the perspective of an out, gay man, making it of particular interest to LGBTQ+ readers. Jim was kind enough to answer a few questions about the book in early 2024.

Gregg Shapiro: Jim, why was now the time to write your memoir, "All Pride, No Ego?"
Jim Fielding: I have reached the stage in my life where I am very focused on giving back and taking care of my family and my community. I realized I have a unique story to share, and that not many queer leaders have reached the levels in corporate America that I have. I wanted other leaders to know it was not easy, but that it was possible. I truly believe representation matters and I wanted to write the book I wish I had earlier in my career. I also felt that my life lessons would resonate with many people. I am thrilled with the response so far.

GS: How long did it take you, from start to finish?
JF: It took me almost one year, and I pushed! Originally, the project timeline was 18 months but my publisher, John Wiley & Sons, wanted to get my book out in fall 2023, rather than the original Spring 2024. In November 2022, I wrote over 10,000 words in one week on a vacation. Bless my partner (Joe)!

GS: Who would you say is the target audience for "All Pride, No Ego?"
JF: I think it is for anyone navigating their career journey and seeking their authenticity, but especially those readers from historically underrepresented and marginalized communities. Of course, there are autobiographical elements of my personal queer journey, but I have been so grateful for the reception from all communities and audiences.

GS: Please say a few words, for the readers, about how you arrived at the title for the book, "All Pride, No Ego."
JF: In reflecting on my life and my career journey, I realized that I had to accept my truths and story unconditionally to fully blossom as a leader. That is the "all pride" part. I also realized that there were times I let my ego get in the way and drive my behavior and decision making. I spent a long time seeking external validation and I realized I needed to move through life with humility and gratitude. So, "no ego!"

GS: You're a Toledo, Ohio native and have lived in Bloomington, Indiana, as well as Minneapolis and Chicago. In what ways would you say that all the time in the Midwest, including your formative years, shaped you as a person?
JF: Don't forget Detroit and Madison, Wisconsin [laughs]. I am so proud of my Midwestern roots and ethics. I think being raised and educated there gave me an appreciation for hard work, honesty, the value of an education, and the need to give back and take care of others. I was raised with the Golden Rule, and I hope I still live it every day.

GS: Coming out to family members often varies from person to person, as you wrote. In 2024, as the far-right has amped up attacks on the LGBTQ+ community, what words of advice do you have to offer those both coming out and who are already out?
JF: It is such an individual process and decision, and it is never easy. Our reality is that we are constantly "coming out" any time we enter a new workplace or situation. I prefer the term "inviting in," as I am inviting you in to hear and share my truth and my story. You have earned my trust and I feel safe with you, so I am going to open up fully. For those considering "inviting in" for the first time, I encourage you to prepare yourself fully and to know that there are resources and a community waiting to support you. You must be safe and protected, first and foremost. For those of us living out already, I think we have to double down on sharing our stories, especially in the face of this current environment. We cannot be legislated back into the closets. We have fought too long and too hard to just stand by and watch essential human rights and social justice be stripped from our community.

GS: As an out gay man, how would you compare the experience of being queer in the various cities in which you lived?
JF: My experience varies by geography. I lived in California for 25 years and realize now that I took it for granted. I always felt safe and at least tolerated, if not fully accepted by everyone in the places I lived there. The Midwest was up and down, but I found my communities

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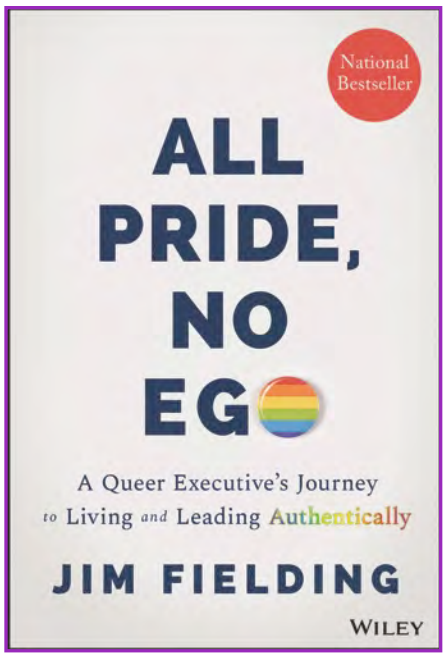
in the big cities there. Now that I live in the South, I have had to re-arm my gaydar and be more aware of my surroundings. Atlanta is amazing, but I am very conscious of my language and attitude in other parts of Georgia.

GS: You write about the role of mentors in your life. Why was it important to include that?
JF: First, I realized that I had never had a gay mentor, and that struck me as odd, and I thought I had to share that insight. Second, I would not be here today with the stories or the career I have had without some excellent mentors and bosses. It takes a village, and I am so grateful for their wisdom, guidance, and insights. I wanted to share that as a "thank you."

GS: Having worked for Disney in an executive capacity, how do you feel about Florida governor Ron DeSantis' attack on the entertainment giant?
JF: Simply put, I find it ridiculous. I do not understand biting the hand that feeds you and drives so much revenue for your state. Disney's initial weak reaction was another driver for me writing the book. I was incensed at their lack of standing up for their queer team members, alumni, and guests. I was thrilled when Bob Iger returned, as I knew he would more successfully manage this insane situation. Demonizing our community for political gains should not be tolerated!

GS: Your resume also includes your work for Gap and Claire's, to name just a couple of the companies. Why do you think queer people are attracted to the retail world?
JF: I think retail is creative, fast-paced, and demanding. It's also an industry that had representation much earlier than other industries. Gap, for example, recognized domestic partners long before there were any legal protections required. It is also an industry where you saw queer people moving up and making a difference.

GS: Finally, do you think you have another book in you, and if so, have you started thinking about or writing it?



JF: Thank you for asking! I cannot believe I am saying it, but, yes! I think I have a few more in me. I am constantly writing down notes or ideas, especially when I am on the book tour, but I think I will narrow in on my topics later in 2024.

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GRAB A PLANE

Pride Journey: Las Vegas

By Joey Amato

Las Vegas, known for its vibrant and inclusive atmosphere, embraces LGBTQ culture with open arms, making it a thriving hub for the community. Iconic events like the annual Las Vegas Pride Parade and Festival bring together people from all walks of life to celebrate diversity and unity. Las Vegas Pride is typically in early October, so start planning now.

The city's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in the diverse range of LGBTQ-friendly accommodations, ensuring that visitors feel welcome and respected. Beyond the nightlife, Las Vegas hosts a variety of LGBTQ-focused community organizations, support groups, and cultural events that contribute to the rich tapestry of the city's inclusive ethos. Whether exploring the famous entertainment offerings or participating in community-driven initiatives, LGBTQ individuals and allies alike find a warm and accepting home in the vibrant tapestry of LGBTQ culture in Las Vegas.

Ever since I was young, I have always wanted to stay at Bellagio. Its iconic foundations have fascinated me for decades. The hotel stands as an epitome of luxury and sophistication, offering an unparalleled experience that seamlessly blends opulence, entertainment, and fine dining. From the moment you step into the grand lobby, it's evident that Bellagio is committed to providing a world-class stay, especially when you glance at the ceiling adorned with Chihuly glass sculptures.

I stayed in a recently renovated room in the Spa Tower with an unobstructed view of the Vegas strip and the fountains. The attention to detail is evident in the tasteful decor, plush furnishings, and modern amenities. Beginning at 3 p.m. on weekdays and noon on weekends, the choreographed water show set against the backdrop of the Las Vegas Strip is a mesmerizing display of artistry, combining music, light, and water in perfect harmony. It sets the tone for the exquisite experiences that await within Bellagio.

Bellagio is also home to the famous Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, a lush oasis that undergoes seasonal transformations, displaying stunning floral displays and thematic installations. This botanical escape provides a serene contrast to the lively atmosphere of the casino and the bustling Strip. During our stay, the staff was completing its new Springtime exhibition, which gave us Alice in Wonderland vibes.

For those seeking entertainment, Bellagio offers the spectacular "O" by Cirque du Soleil, a water-themed extravaganza that complements the hotel's overall theme. Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art is another cultural gem within the hotel, featuring rotating exhibitions that display masterpieces from around the world.

Although it is possible to never leave the hotel, we wanted to experience other MGM Resorts properties, so we headed to LPM at the Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas for dinner. LPM offers an exquisite dining experience that effortlessly marries Mediterranean charm with the vibrant energy of the Strip. From the moment you step through the entrance, you are greeted by an ambiance that strikes a perfect balance between sophistication and conviviality.

LPM's interior is a visual feast, adorned with chic decor, warm lighting, and an intimate atmosphere. The combination of contemporary design elements and classic French accents creates a welcoming space that feels both elegant and comfortable. Whether you're celebrating a special

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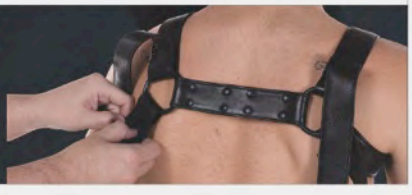

occasion or seeking a romantic dinner, LPM's ambiance sets the stage for an unforgettable dining experience.

LPM's menu is a culinary triumph, highlighting the rich and diverse flavors of the French Riviera. The emphasis on fresh, high-quality ingredients is evident in every dish. We began our meal with a variety of appetizers, including the Yellowtail Carpaccio, Escargots, and an signature Burrata prepared with heritage tomatoes and basil and topped with white truffles. For our main courses, we decided to focus on seafood entrees, so we tried the Lobster Risotto and grilled Chilean Bass. Both were prepared to perfection and paired very well together if you are looking to share entrées.

Of course, one of the biggest attractions of Las Vegas is the strip itself. Spend a few hours meandering through each hotel and taking in the Vegas vibe. There is no other place in the world quite like it.

If you are in the mood for a little adventure, head to Area15, located about 10 minutes from the strip. Area15 is an immersive entertainment complex that blends art, technology, and entertainment in a unique and captivating way. Boasting an otherworldly exterior and a dynamic interior, Area15 is home to a variety of innovative experiences, including interactive art installations and virtual reality adventures. Its anchor tenant, the Meow Wolf's Omega Mart, is a surreal supermarket-like environment filled with mind-bending art and hidden mysteries. The venue also hosts concerts and live events including Beyond Brunch, a variety show hosted by drag queen extraordinaire Andrew Ryan. The two-hour spectacle includes a wonderful buffet and performances by talented acts ranging from hoop dancers to Cirque-style entertainers. The show is well worth the price of admission; it is not your typical drag brunch.

Spend the afternoon touring Area15 or head to The Sphere, Las Vegas' newest concert venue. Rock icons U2 opened the venue with a 40-night run, but guests can purchase tickets to Darren Aronofsky's multisensory film Postcard from Earth.

For a trip down memory lane, especially if you are in you were born in the '70s or '80s, check out Retro by Voltaggio at Mandalay Bay. The restaurant owned by Top Chef stars, Bryan and Michael Voltaggio, takes diners on a nostalgic journey through time, blending modern culinary techniques with comforting flavors reminiscent of classic American dishes set in a retro-chic environment. The space is adorned with quirky memorabilia, neon accents, and a colorful palette that captures a sense of nostalgia without feeling overly kitschy, creating a welcoming environment for diners to unwind and enjoy the culinary adventure.

Retro by Voltaggio's menu is a playful exploration of classic American favorites. We started our dinner with the deviled eggs with smoked trout roe along with the Beet Steak Tartare, which was incredible. Next came the bluefin tuna Ceviche served over coconut crushed ice. For our entrées, we tried the Trout Meunière, which was served in a lemon and caper sauce, as well as the Lobster Thermidor with lobster waffles… yes, you read that correctly. It's as delicious as it sounds.

Save room for the dessert cart which contains innovative creations that satisfy the sweet tooth. Whether you're a fan of nostalgic flavors or simply seeking a unique and enjoyable meal, Retro by Voltaggio is worth the visit.

After dinner, catch a performance of Michael Jackson "ONE" by Cirque du Soleil also at

Mandalay Bay. The show is a captivating tribute to the King of Pop that seamlessly blends the magic of Cirque du Soleil with the timeless music and iconic choreography of Michael Jackson. From the moment the lights dim to the final bow, the show is a high-energy, emotionally charged celebration of the legendary entertainer's life and legacy. This isn't your typical Cirque du Soleil show and is more like a concert featuring all of Michael's greatest hits, memorable dance moves, and state-of-the-art production. I felt like "ONE" is the type of concert Michael would have wanted to perform if he were still with us.

The thing I like most about Vegas is it is always evolving. Every time you visit, there is something new to see or do. Viva Las Vegas!

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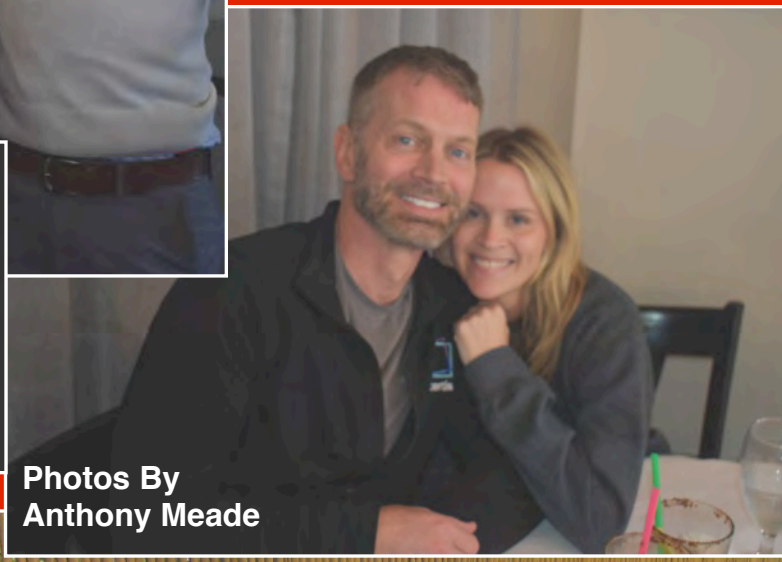

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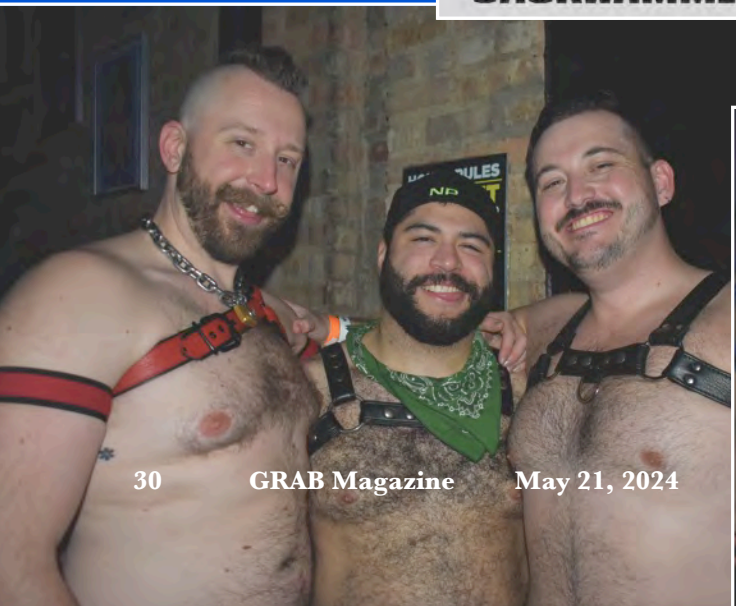

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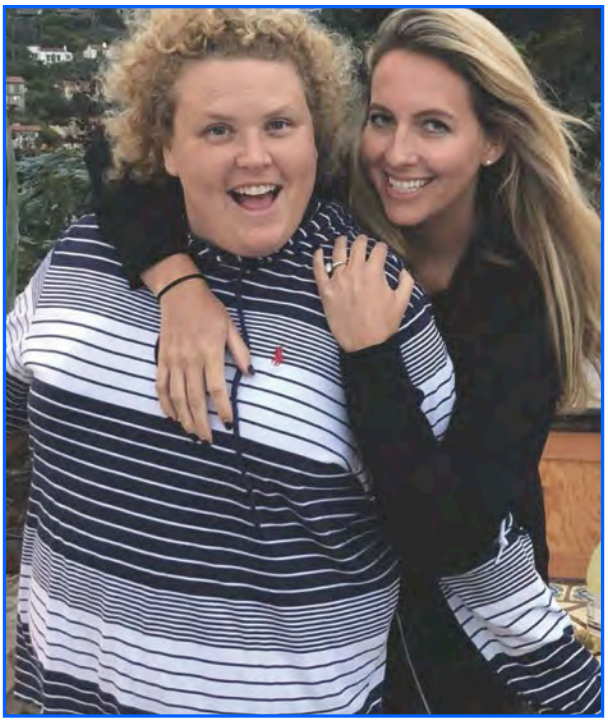
GRAB A PARADE

Fortune Feimster & Jax Smith Named Grand Marshals



PRIDEChicago, the all-volunteer organization behind the iconic Chicago Pride Parade for over 50 years, has announced the selection of comedienne, Fortune Feimster and her wife Jax Smith as Grand Marshals for the 2024 Chicago Pride Parade on Sunday, June 30th starting at 11 a.m.

Fortune Feimster, a beloved stand-up comedian, writer, and actor, along with her wife ***Jax***, will lead the procession, bringing their infectious energy and inspiring love story to the heart of Chicago's LGBTQ+ community. With her trademark humor and relatable storytelling, Fortune Feimster has captivated audiences worldwide. Her two one-hour Netflix specials, "Sweet & Salty" and "Good Fortune," have garnered critical acclaim and accolades, including nominations at the Critics' Choice Awards. Feimster's comedic prowess transcends barriers of age, background, and sexual orientation, fostering unity through laughter. In addition to standup, Feimster co-stars alongside Arnold Schwarzenegger in the hit action-comedy series FUBAR on Netflix. She also co-hosts the very popular podcast Handsome with Tig Notaro and Mae Martin.

"We are honored to be named the Grand Marshals for Chicago Pride," said Feimster. "Chicago holds a special place in our hearts—it's home to a great comedy scene and home to the best audiences. It's also where Jax and I first met nine years ago, during Pride. As we celebrate our community and our anniversary, it feels like a beautiful full-circle moment."

The couple's love story began at Chicago Pride in 2015, just days after the Supreme Court's historic ruling for nationwide marriage equality. Since then, they have shared a journey of love and commitment, culminating in their marriage in October 2020.The celebrity comedienne and her wife will join Community Grand Marshals, ***Art Johnston*** & ***Jose 'Pepe' Pena*** and ***Myles*** & ***Precious Brady-Davis.***

Chicago activist and bar owner Art Johnston and his partner in life and business, Jose "Pepe" Pena. The couple, who have been together for 50 years, helped create community – opening the iconic gay bar Sidetrack in 1982 - and fueled a civil rights movement that is still active today. Johnston was an important organizer in passage of Chicago and Cook County human rights legislation and was a co-founder of the Illinois Federation for Human Rights, now known as Equality Illinois. The duo, nationally recognized LGBTQ+ civil

Pepe and Art

rights leaders, are also the subject of an award-winning feature documentary, ART AND PEP.

Longtime LGBTQ+ activists, community organizers and high-profile transgender couple Myles and Precious Brady-Davis. Myles Brady-Davis is communications director of Equality Illinois and Precious Brady-Davis recently became the first Black transgender person appointed to public office in Cook County as well as the first trans person to serve on a water reclamation board in U.S. history. Precious wrote the best-selling book, I Have Always Been Me. The couple married in 2016 and are now raising two children.

Myles and Precious Brady-Davis

The 53rd annual Chicago Pride Parade starts at 11 a.m., Sunday, June 30th 2024 and will travel through Chicago's landmark LGBTQ + neighborhood of Lakeview. Themed "Pride is Power," the parade promises to be a celebration of love, unity, and resilience, reflecting the incredible culture and spirit of the LGBTQ+ community. For more information and the most current updates about the parade, visit ***PRIDEChicago.org.***

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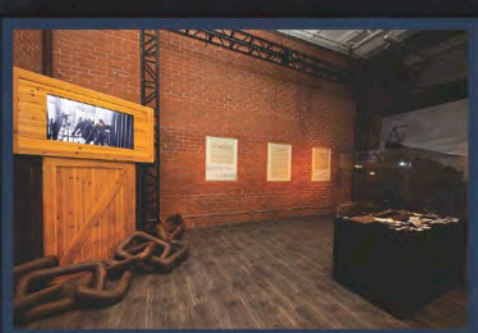

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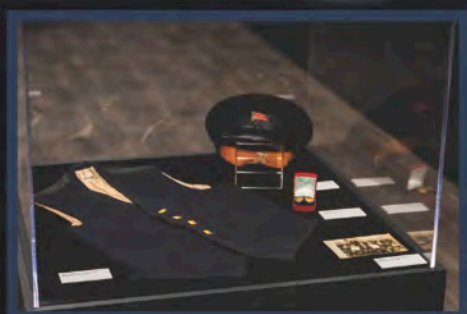

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Top 30 Dance Chart For the First week of May

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	Artist	Title
1	Different Heaven	Chasing Stars (Radio Edit)
2	Tiesto	Both ft. Bia
3	Hayla	Fall Again (Radio Edit)
4	Dubvision & Afrojack	Underwater (Radio)
5	Jes	Let It All Come Down (Allen Watts Remix)
6	Manuel Riva & Misha Miller	Wild Young Heart
7	Felix Jaehn & Jonas Blue	Past Life
8	Haliene & Elephante	Hollow
9	Alok & Bebe Rexha	Deep In Your Love (Radio Edit)
10	Seven Lions & Above & Beyond	Over Now ft. Opposite The Other
11	Lucas & Steve	What We Know ft. Conor Byrne
12	David Guetta & Mason vs Princess Superstar	Perfect
13	Dannii Minogue & Autone	Thinking 'Bout Us (Edit)
14	Heidi Klum	Sunglasses At Night (Radio Edit)
15	Robin Schulz & Rita Ora & Tiago PZK	I'll Be There
16	Kastra & Luma	Think About You
17	Seven Lions & Illenium	Not Even Love Ft. Asdis
18	Morgin Madison & Ryan Lucian & Jas.	Tell Me Who You Are
19	Brando	Too Close
20	Jack Wins	Us
21	Lucas & Steve X Philip Strand	Best Of Me
22	Zen Freeman	No Sleep
23	Vandelux	Right Now Ft. Parson James
24	James Chris & Chris Willis	Eyes Wide Open (Radio Mix)
25	Tiesto X Moguai	Explode (Short Radio Edit)
26	Casso x Raye x D block Europe	Prada
27	Tate Mcrae	Exes (Regard Clean Radio Edit)
28	Z3LLA	Why Should I (Radio Edit)
29	Manuel Riva X Eneli	Strangers To Lovers
30	DVBBS	This Moment

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Daily Specials;

MONDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . $5 Stoli Cocktails (Any Flavor), Everyday Specials: $5Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts***.@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 4pm-2am. ***Charlies:*** Bingo 7 – 11 pm Dancing until close***. Hydrate:*** Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm.. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $5 Well Drinks.***Shakers on Clark:*** Comedy Night $1 off Well Drinks and Well Shots. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. ***Steamworks:*** Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons. Everyday Specials: $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's) Free Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 5pm-4am. Horny Bastards A Night for those who just didn't get enough over the weekend. 5/27 Beer Bust $2Bud/Bud Light Drafts Cook Out 3-6pm ClubRoom Opens at 6pm, Survivor Party 10pm.

TUESDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: . $3 House Shots, $7 Big Miller Lite Drafts Everyday Specials: $5Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts***.@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. ***Cell Block:*** Open 4pm-2am. ***Charlie's:*** Tune Up Tuesday Karaoke 7 – 11PM, Tag Team Tuesdays 11p – 2am, Dancing until close. ***Hydrate:*** TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis ***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $3 House Shots, $7 Big Miller Lite Drafts. Happy Hour Specials 5pm–8pm: $5 Stoli Mules (all flavors). Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. ***Shakers on Clark:*** $3 Domestic Beers. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. ***Steamworks:*** Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 Amsterdam Cocktails, $5 Tallboys Everyday Specials:,$5Jager, $5 Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 5pm - 4am***.***Hardcore Cruisin' No Cell Phones/Wifi.

WEDNESDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $ New Amsterdam Cocktails $5 Tallboy Beers Specials: Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. ***Cell Block:*** Open 4pm-2am. ***Charlie's:*** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, Sapphire's Secret Shadows 10pm – 1 am, Dancing until close. ***Jackhammer:*** $5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons, Everyday Specials: $5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, $4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis ***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $4Miller Lite Drafts, $5 Stolis (All Flavors). Happy Hour Specials 7pm–10pm: $6 Any BIG drafts Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am $5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. ***Shakers on Clark***: Karaoke Night $1 Off Long Islands. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, All Things Taylor & Ariana 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Britney & Rihanna last Wed of month: all 9pm-2am. ***Steamworks:*** Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $3 House Shots, $5 Tito's Cocktails, $7 Big Miller Lite Drafts Everyday Specials: $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)FreeDarts ***Touche:***Open 5pm - 4am.Best of Chicago Welcome PartyHosted by MCL2024 Vince Jay.

THURSDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons . Everyday Specials:$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts***. @mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. ***Charlie's:*** Survivor 10 pm – 1 am, Dancing Until Close. ***Jackhammer:*** $3 House Shots $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails $5 Miller Lit Tallboys Everyday Specials: $5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, $4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis..***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $6 Tito Cocktails, Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $5 Deep Eddy Cocktails. ***Shakers on Clark:*** $1 off All Call Liquor Mixed Drinks,Karaoke 10pm-1am. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, Let's Go Thursdays with Alex Kay & Friends 9pm-2am. ***Steamworks:*** Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails$5 Tallboy Beers Everyday Specials: , $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 5pm - 4am.Throwback Thursdays70's & 80's Music & Porn by BijouVideo. 70's & 80's Music.5/23 Bears Gone Wild Full Moon Party& Contest.

Daily Specials;

FRIDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts$3 House Shots. Happy Hour Specials: 3pm–6pm: $4 New Amsterdam Cocktails $5 Chicago Handshakes. Everyday Specials:$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. ***@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. Baton Show Lounge: Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 4pm-2am. ***Charlie's:*** 1st and 3rd Fierce Fridays 10p – 1am, 2nd Fierce Fridays - Traffic Light Party 10p – 1am, 4th Fierce Fridays - Glow Up Party 10p – 1am, 5th Fierce Fridays – Strut 10p – 1am, Dancing until close. ***Jackhammer:*** $5 Miller Lite Tallboys $8 New Amsterdam & Redbull Happy Hour Specials 5–9pm: $5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons $5 Chicago Handshake Everyday Specials: $5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, $4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. Kit Kat Lounge: Happy Hour 5-7pm $8.95 Martinis. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $6 Tito's Cocktails $7.50 Big Miller Lites. Happy Hour Specials.5pm–8pm: $5 Chicago Handshakes. Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 4-7pm. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, TGIF Show Tunes 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $3 House Shots, $7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts Happy Hour Specials: 3pm–6pm: $4 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials: $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tall Boys Beers (Buch Light, PBR, Hamm's), Free Darts. ***Touche:*** 5/24 Latin Leather Night. 5/31 Pride Month Kick Off Party

SATURDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $6 Lagunitas IPADrafts. Happy Hour Specials: ½ Off All Drafts $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials:$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. ***@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. ***Baton Show Lounge:*** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 2pm-3am. ***Charlie's:*** Country Line Dancing 7 – 10pm, The Main Event 10pm – 1am Dancing until Close. ***Jackhammer:*** $3 House Shots $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails $5 Miller Lite Tallboys Happy Hour Specials 5–9pm: $5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons$5 Chicago HandshakeEveryday Specials: $5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, $4 Tallboy Beers (Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. Jackhammer: $3 House Shots $5 Miller Lite TallBoys Happy Hour Specials: $5 Whiskeys, Ryes and Bourbons. Everyday Specials: $5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, $4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. ***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $5 Signature Margaritas Happy Hour Specials.2pm–5pm: $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails $12 Mimosa Carafes, Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 1pm, SaturGay Drag & Games with Sasha & Zamora Love 3-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 Lost Coast Tangerine Wheat, $5 Signature Margaritas, Happy Hour Specials: 12pm–3pm: ½ Off All Drafts Everyday Specials: $5Jager, Fireball & Malort, $4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 2pm - 5am. 5/25 Submit to your dark fantasies CWB 4pm. 6/1 Bear Night Midnight Pizza Panic. 6/8 Dungeon Master Night S&M Demo @ Midnight CWB5pm 6/15 Gear Night with Bluf/Chicago Barber & bootblack on duty, dress code in Clubroom BNC 6pm.

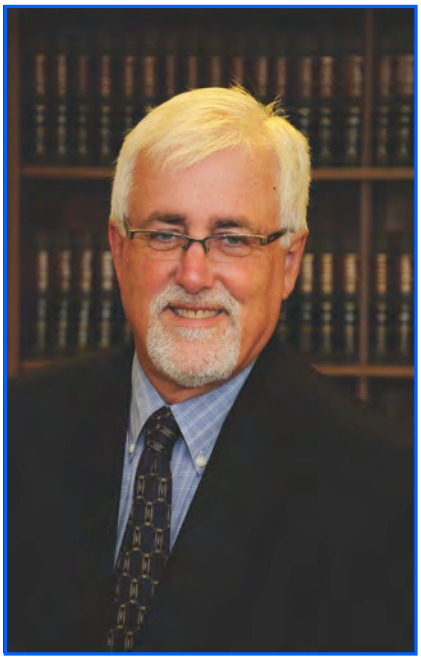
SUNDAY

2 Bears Tavern Uptown: $5 Signature Margaritas, $6 Chicago Handshakes Happy Hour Specials 2pm–5pm $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails Everyday Specials:$5 Jager, Fireball & Malort $4 Tallboy Beers (BuschLight, PBR, Hamm's), Free Pinball & Darts. ***@mosphere:*** $6 Jack Products, $4 Domestic Draft, House Shots $2. ***Baton Show Lounge:*** Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 2pm-2am ***Charlie's:*** Queeriod! Every other Sunday 5pm – 7pm, Singsational Sunday Karaoke 7pm – 11pm Mas Leche 11pm – 1am, Dancing until close. ***Hydrate:*** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. ***Jackhammer:*** $5 New Amsterdam CoctKails $7 Jackhammered Long Islands Happy Hour Specials :1st Sunday: $7 Planter's Punch2nd Sunday: $5 Dog Bowls (Premium Well) 3rd Sunday: $3 Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's Tallboy Beers4th Sunday: $5 Stoli Cocktails (Any Flavor)5th Sunday: $6 New Amsterdam & Red BullEveryday Specials: $5 Fireball, Jager & Malort Shots, $4 Tallboy Beers(Busch Light, PBR & Hamm's. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Divalicious brunch 11am-3pm, Happy Hour 4-7pm $8.95 Martinis.***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $3 House Shots, $12 Mimosa Carafes. Happy Hour Specials:7pm–10pm: $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails. Everyday Specials $5 Jager, Fireball & Malort. Free Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm ***Shakers on Clark***: $1 off Bloody Mary's, $1 off Mules: Vodka, Tequila, or Whiskey. And $1 off all Revolution beers. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 1pm, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am ***The Sofo Tap:*** $6 New Amsterdam Cocktails $7.50 Big Miller Lite Drafts Happy Hour Specials: 12pm–2pm: $3 Miller Lite Drafts 1pm–3pm: $3 House Shots FREE Chicago-style hot-dogs (while supplies last) Everyday Specials $5Jager, Fireball & Malort.$4 Tall Boy Beers (Busch Light, PBR,Hamm's)Free Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 2pm - 4am. Beer Bust $2 Bud Light Drafts, $2 Sodas, Clubroom Opens 6pm, Movie Night 7pm. 5/26 Super Ripe hot go-go Dudes& DJ Harry T.

GRAB ROGER

Coming Out As a Winner When Selling Your House

By Roger V. McCaffre-Boss, Esq.



With the real estate market swinging between glutted with too many houses or short of inventory, the three biggest mistakes, I see sellers make, are the following:

Overpricing. The greatest mistake that sellers of real estate make is overpricing. The problem with pricing a house is that no house is worth a specific dollar amount. Accept the reality that the market has changed and your house is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it.

The way the price is set can determine several factors about the sale: how quickly the house will sell, how difficult it will be to find a qualified buyer and how much you will stand to gain from the proceeds. Some owners feel that they can get away with overpricing their property at the start and then lower the price if they have a negative response from the market. Unfortunately, by that time the house has been on the market a long time – it has become "shopworn."

Every potential buyer asks two questions: "What's the price?" and "How long has it been on the market?" The longer the house has been on the market the more the seller loses his or her ability to negotiate from a position of strength. The buyer smells blood. The seller and the price immediately become vulnerable. A buyer will not pay a premium price if he or she believes the property is hard to sell or not in demand.

Slow Lawyers. Real estate brokers often call lawyers "the deal-breakers." Most often lawyers foul up deals by their lack of a sense of urgency. They're not at the office, they can't be found and they don't return your phone calls. Every day the lawyer delays, the less likely that the deal will proceed to a closing.

Disclose, Disclose, Disclose. Sellers should make a complete disclosure of everything known about their house. Remember the point in selling a home is to end the seller's financial obligation for the property. That's why its best for the seller to make a full disclosure to their buyer so the seller won't have to worry if they will be sued after the closing.

With older homes, the four things that a buyer is concerned about is mold, the roof, the furnace and the presence of asbestos.

The residential asbestos problem is a big issue for sellers because of the Illinois Residential Real Property Disclosure Act. Under the law, all home sellers are required to complete a disclosure sheet advising any potential buyers of problems or known defects with the house. Question number 15 on the sheet asks if the seller knows there to be any "unsafe concentrations of or unsafe conditions relating to asbestos" in the home. All home sellers will have to answer this question yes, no or not applicable.

My advice is to make a complete disclosure of everything known about your house. Such lawsuits can be avoided by using the following safeguards:

Sellers should insist that the buyer have the house inspected. If the buyer knows about a defect and there is written evidence such as an inspection report, the chances of a lawsuit decrease.

At the time the seller signs a listing agreement with a realtor, the seller should provide the realtor with a list of all known defects in the house. The list should be shown to prospective buyers so they will be aware of any known defects. The realtor will present the defects to the prospective buyer in a neutral way and at the same time stress the positive aspects of the house. It's the realtor's job to sell the house and put it in the best light possible.

Roger McCaffrey-Boss is a gradute of Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a member of the Chicago Bar Association. You can email him at ***RVMLawyer@aol.com****. He suggests that you consult your own lawyer for any specific questions regarding the issues raised in this column.*

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GRAB HOLLY

Never Trifle with a Queen

By Holly Maholm

Recently, I witnessed some of the misbehavior of which "mean girls" are so often guilty, and it set me wondering… Accordingly, seeing Sassy Pants resting in the shade of an apple tree in the orchard at the Horse Rescue, I took a seat next to her and inquired, "Sassy, I have seen several instances of cruel, self-centered behavior by 'means girls' in our local high school, and I wonder, are there 'mean girls' among the unicorns?" Sassy smiled indulgently, then replied.

"No, Holly, we unicorns are not susceptible to that vice… that temptation to practice so much bullying that others see in us that 'mean streak' which denotes a 'mean girl.' As you know, mean girls usually constitute a small group of weak and insecure young women who depend upon the leadership of one 'queen bee,' and who inflict their reign of terror upon a surrounding population of 'ugly ducklings.'

"However, if you think about it, you will appreciate that we unicorns are nothing less than 'enchanting,' and moreover, that we each have the power to disguise ourselves with as much additional grace, refinement and beauty as our imagination allows. Thus, since you will never see an 'ugly duckling' among the unicorns, you will never see any unicorn fall victim to any would-be 'queen bee' among her sisters. It follows that we unicorns have no patience with mean girls. Let me tell you a story that illustrates this truth.

"Not many years ago, Dot brought to the Horse Rescue a young filly needing a home. Now, this filly was a most extraordinary creature. She was at once alluring, adorable, charming and seductive. All agreed she was the most beautiful Golden Palomino we had ever seen (as beautiful as our Queen when she disguises herself as a member of that breed).

"It was not long before this animal – her name being Ruby – realized that she was far superior to the other horses in beauty, and regrettably, she began to exhibit all those vices of a 'four-legged, equine mean girl.' She lorded her beauty over all the other animals, claiming the right to be first to eat her fill from the trough of oats at dinner time.

"But what was most egotistical of her was this: She toured all the stalls in the barn, including those occupied not only by the rescue horses but also the resident unicorns, and she decided that the only stall which was equal to her preeminent beauty was the stall in use by our Queen Penelope. Then, summoning all her pride and arrogance, Ruby confronted our queen, informing her dismissively that henceforth it would be she who would take her rest in that stall, and Penelope would just have to find somewhere else to sleep.

"Now, our queen was at first taken aback at Ruby's presumptuousness, but she quickly recovered and went off to take the necessary corrective action. Accordingly, that night Penelope shared a stall with Glitter, while Ruby enjoyed the honor of occupying the most prestigious stall in the barn.

All of us waited expectantly for Ruby to learn that lesson we all could recite by heart: 'Never trifle with a Queen.'

"The next day, Dot brought into the barn yet another new rescue horse, one displaying beauty which was half-again as rare, picturesque and eye-catching as Ruby, herself. This was another filly, equally as spirited as Ruby, but this horse was of a breed not often met with in North America. This was an Akhal-Teke, a breed of horse native to Turkmenistan and descended from horses kept by the armies of Genghis Khan.

"This Akhal-Teke had a unique, shimmering coat which had the appearance of being metallic, and its gleaming gold color made the animal look for all the world like a veritable 'Golden Horse.' This new occupant of our barn (who, you may have guessed, was our Queen Penelope in disguise) was quick to single out Ruby, and seeing how dejected and crestfallen Ruby was to be overshadowed by this new resident, spoke gently to her…

"Oh, so you're Ruby? Indeed! You are as beautiful as the others have said! But let us not quarrel in some self-defeating competition to see who is 'best.' Let us be friends, and let us share our sympathy and love with the others in this place. And Ruby… if it makes you happy to rest in that stall you are now occupying, please be my guest. It gives me great pleasure to share with others what little I have, and I have no doubt that you and I will soon be best of friends."

"And Holly, whether it was Queen Penelope's unsurpassed beauty – or the purity of her heart – that won over that would-be 'mean girl,' I cannot say, but I can report that Ruby learned her lesson, and thereafter shared a stall with me."

(*To be continued)*

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Holly's book Offered Magic: My Life Among the Unicorns (now available on Amazon) which collects the first 126 episodes of Holly's adventures involving both magical unicorns and her LGBTQ friends. Send a message to Holly at ***www.hollymaholm.com.***

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GRAB A BOOK

By Terri Schlichenmeyer

"Here We Go Again" *by Alison Cochrun c.2024, Atria$17.99 368 pages*

Can you do me a solid?

Just one little favor, a quick errand, it won't take long. You can do it next time you're out, in fact. Consider it your good deed for the day, if it makes you feel better. A mitzvah. An indulgence to a fellow human. As in the new novel, "Here We Go Again" by Alison Cochrun, think of it as a life-changing thing.

She couldn't remember the woman's first name.

Did Logan Maletis really ever know it? Everybody at her job – administration, students, other teachers – called everyone else by their last name so the colleague she'd been hooking up with for weeks was just "Schaffer." Whatever, Logan didn't care and she wasn't cold-hearted but when Savannah broke up with her in public, she did wonder if maybe, possibly, the awful names she called Logan were fair or true.

Rosemary Hale would've agreed with every single last one of those nasty names.

Once, she and Logan were BBFs but after a not-so-little incident happened the summer they were fourteen, she hated Logan with a white-hot passion. Every time Rosemary ran into Logan at school, she regretted that they worked in the same place. Seeing her old nemesis, even just once in awhile, was an irritation she could barely stand.

They had nothing in common at all, except Joseph Delgado.

He'd been their English teacher years ago, and they both followed in his footsteps. He kept them from going stir-crazy in their small Oregon town. He was friend, father figure, and supporter for each of them when they separately came to understand that they were lesbians.

They loved Joe. They'd do anything for him.

Which is why he had one favor to ask...

With a recent diagnosis of incurable cancer, Joe didn't want to die surrounded by hospital walls. Would Logan and Rosemary drive him and his dog to Maine, to a cabin he owned? Would they spend time crammed side-by-side in a used van with a gay logo, keeping Joe alive, coast-to-coast? Could they do it without screaming the whole way?

Can you avoid laughing at this convoluted, but very funny story? Highly unlikely, because "Here We Go Again" takes every nightmare you've ever had of busted friendship, bad vacations, and long-lost love, and it makes them hilarious.

It's not the story that does it, though. The story's a bit too long and it can drag, but author Alison Cochrun's characters are perfectly done, each one of them. Logan is profane in all the right ways and yes, she's a jerk but an appealing one. Rosemary is too prim, too proper, too straight-laced, but Cochrun lets her be unlaced in a steamy passage that's not misplaced. You'll love how this story moves along (although sometimes slowly!) and you'll love how it ends.

If you've ever endured a cross-country trip stuffed in the back seat of a hot car for miles and miles, sharing a seat with an abrasive sibling, this is your book. "Here We Go Again" is a solid vacation read.

"Unswerving: A Novel" by Barbara Ridley c.2024, University of Wisconsin Press $19.95 227 pages

It happened in a heartbeat.

A split-second, a half a breath, that's all it took. It was so quick, so sharp-edged that you can almost draw a line between before and after, between then and now. Will anything ever be the same again? Perhaps, but maybe not. As in the new book "Unswerving" by Barbara Ridley, things change, and so might you.

She could remember lines, hypnotizing yellow ones spaced on a road, and her partner, Les, asleep in the seat beside her. It was all so hazy. Everything Tave Greenwich could recall before she woke up in a hospital bed felt like a dream.

It was as though she'd lost a month of her life.

"Life," if you even wanted to call it that – which she didn't. Tave's hands resembled claws bent at the wrist. Before the accident, she was a talented softball catcher but now she could barely get her arms to raise above her shoulders. She could hear her stomach gurgle, but she couldn't feel it. Paralyzed from the chest down, Tave had to have help with even the most basic care.

She was told that she could learn some skills again, if she worked hard. She was told that she'd leave rehab some day soon. What nobody told her was how Les, Leslie, her partner, girlfriend, love, was doing after the accident.

Physical therapist Beth Farringdon was reminded time and again not to get overinvolved with her patients, but she saw something in Tave that she couldn't ignore. Beth was on the board of directors of a group that sponsored sporting events for disabled athletes, she knew people who could serve as role models for Tave, and she knew that all this could ease Tave's adjustment into her new life. It was probably not entirely in her job description, but Beth couldn't stop thinking of ways to help Tave who, at twenty-three, was practically a baby. She could, for instance, take Tave on outings or help find Les – even though it made Beth's own girlfriend, Katy, jealous...

So, here's a little something to know before you start reading "Unswerving": author Barbara Ridley is a former nurse-practitioner who used to care for patients with spinal cord injuries. That should give readers a comfortable sense of satisfaction, knowing that her experiences give this novel an authenticism that feels right and rings true, no faking.

But that's not the only appeal of this book: while there are a few minor things that might have readers shaking their heads (HIPAA, anyone?), Ridley's characters are mostly lifelike and mostly likable. Even the nasties are well-done and the mysterious character that's there-not-there boosts the appeal. Put everyone together, twist a little bit to the left, give them some plotlines that can't ruined by early guessing, and you've got a quick-read novel that you can enjoy and feel good about sharing. And share you will because this is a book that may also open a few eyes and make readers think. Start "Unswerving" and you'll (heart) it.

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GRAB HEATH

Perfect Angel

Heath Halo is one half Saint, the other half Sinner

By Josh Beisler

Photo courtesy KinkMen.com

Heath Halo didn't come out of the closet until he was 27. He didn't land his first boyfriend until he was 30. "I've known I was gay my whole life but living on the down lo was what you did in Texas," he explains.

It didn't stop the dreamy and steamy stud from having his man-on-man experiences, though. He recalls his first kiss with a boy at just four years old on the school playground. His first sexual encounter was with a straight bud in high school. "I liked the masculinity of it all, the bro camaraderie," he laughs. He still does. The angelic Halo is showing his devilish horns in his latest fetish films on KinkMen.com. We caught up with the 5'9", 195-pound, bearded, tattooed, and muscular hunk at the Miami home he shares with hubby Nico Bear.

Josh Beisler:What would fans be surprised to learn about Heath Halo?
Heath Halo: People assume I love clubs and nightlife. I'd rather be somewhere comfy, wearing something comfy with a book any day of the week.

JB: What led you to consider a career in adult film?
HH: I didn't! The adult industry chose me. My husband and I are adventurous. We like many different things and are down to try most. We had an idea to start a podcast about a couple exploring their kinks. We figured we would start an OnlyFans and JustForFans to accpmany the podcast and along came Twitter and it all took on a life of its own.

JB: Your husband, of course, is Nico Bear.
HH: Nico is a fuzzy philosopher with a heart that is even bigger than his butt.

JB: How did you meet?
HH: I met my bear at an orgy. The entire room fell away. Nico was the only one there to me. We ended the night talking for like an hour and a half.

JB: Were you always drawn to bear men?
HH: Yeah, big masculine men are who I identify with even though I'm just a tiny fella myself. (Laughing) Muscles and fuzz? I'm in! But I don't really have a type. I like 'em all!

JB: Are you becoming a bear yourself?
HH: Only time will tell. I'd be honored!

JB: How were you introduced to the kink world?
HH: Looking back, I was always into group sex, gaping, and double penetration. I was never what one might call vanilla. But I didn't encounter leather, BDSM and all of the acts most people regard as kink until just a few years ago. My first experience was with chastity and cock and ball torture with a little rope play. I was hooked pretty immediately.

JB: What are some of your favorite fetish activities today?
HH: Bondage in various forms, Dom/Sub, play edging and others…

JB: How did you connect with KinkMen.com?
HH: The team at KinkMen flew me out to their new property in Vegas. That studio is a fetish fantasy world

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of dungeons and dark basements! It's an exciting time to be working with them.

JB: Was your first scene with Sage Rouge?
HH: Yes and lemme tell ya, that man is a solid performer and an amazing sub. He was patient with me as I fumbled through a few new dom activities that the KinkMen.com directors taught me.

JB: How does filming kink scenes compare with filming traditional sex scenes?
HH: I find that I need to feel closer to my scene partners when filming kink scenes. Kink films are more than taking a dick in the butt; it's a cerebral experience! So, for me, I need to build a deeper connection with the guys I'm performing with. It's a trust thing.

JB: Are safe words used?
HH: Yes, safe words are agreed on and boundaries are set before filming so nothing is a surprise to any of the performers. We are never doing something we haven't agreed to and maybe have even suggested ourselves.

JB: Is there something in kink that you haven't done that you'd like to maybe try?
HH: I wanna do more flogging off-camera, for sure.

JB: Would your husband be on board for it?
HH: Yup!

JB: What do you consider your greatest achievement?
HH: My family.

JB: What career might you consider pursuing in the future?
HH: I love fitness, so maybe something involving a gym?

JB: If you could turn back time, what is the one thing you would warn your young self about?
HH: No substance or person can ever make you ok with you; that's your job.

JB: On what occasion do you lie, Heath?
HH: More often than I should, I'm sure! I'd say mostly for convenience-sake.

JB: What is your idea of perfect happiness?
HH: A peaceful home and mind, a career where I'm competent, successful and inspired, and where I have the freedom to spend time with those that mean the most to me.

JB: Like Nico?
HH: Of course.

JB: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
HH: I wish I was brave enough to leave society and go live in the woods somewhere. I do believe that being an adult performer and part of the gig economy is a step out of societal norm so... baby steps.

For more on Heath visit KinkMen.com

Photo courtesy KinkMen.com

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GRABBY AWARDS AND EVENTS THURSDAY MAY 23- SATURDAY MAY 25, 2024

THE 25th Annual Grabby Awards (The Gay Porn Awards) hosted by ***ChiChi-LaRue, Dillion Diaz, Drake Von***, ***Milo Miles*** and Chicago's very own ***Honey West*** will take place Saturday May 25th at the Metro Theater, 3730 N Clark Street in Chicago. Doors open at 6pm show starts at 7pm tickets Available online at ***grabbyAwards.com.***

Thursday May 23rd kicks off Grabby weekend with Legendary DJ Chi-Chi LaRue's Skin Trade Party at Hydrate Nightclub 3458 N. Halsted Party Starts at 9pm $10 Cover.

Friday Night May 24th Meet the Men of Carnal+at Sidetrack 3349 N. Halsted 9-11pm No Cover.

Saturday Night May 25th Grabby After Party sponsored by ***LuxxxeStudios*** bringing nine porn stars & go-go dancers to Charlies Chicago 3726 N Broadway, Party starts at 10pm $10 Cover if tickets are purchased online at **grabbyawards.com** or $15 at the door.

INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER 46 - **MAY 23-27, 2024**

Thursday May 23 - *IML Opening Ceremonies Florentine - Congress Hotel 8:00pm - 10:30pm*

Friday May 24th - *IML Pecs and Personality Contest Venue610 8:00pm - 11:00pm.*

Sunday May 26th - *6:00pm - 9:00pm. International Mr. Leather Contest McCormick Place Skyline Ballroom*
9:00 PM - 4:00AM IML Victory Celebration Concord Music Hall

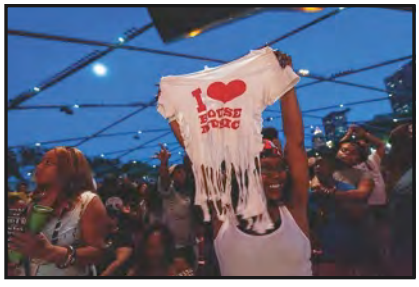
Monday May 27th - *9:00 PM - 4:00 AMBlack and Blue Ball- Chop Shop*

Leather Recovery Meetings
12-step recovery meeting that welcomes all programs and people seeking support in a sober environment during all IML festivities.Guest Room 700 North Tower
- *Thursday 11:00 PM - 12:00 AM,*
- *Friday 11:00 PM - 12:00 AM,*
- *Saturday 11:00 PM - 12:00 AM,*
- *Sunday 11:00 PM - 12:00 AM,*
- *Monday 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM*

Monday May 27th - *9:00 PM - 4:00 AM Black and Blue Ball- Chop Shop*

For a more up-to-date Schedule and information or to Purchase Tickets Visit ***www.imrl.com***

CiITY OF CHICAGO - BIRTHPLACE OF HOUSE MUSIC - CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GENRE CHICAGO HOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL JUNE 2



Mayor Brandon Johnson and the City of Chicago and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) have announced the City's 2024 lineup of free House Music programming, celebrating 40 years since the music genre was born in Chicago, and revolutionized dance music internationally. Making a return to Millennium Park for the 20th Anniversary Summer Season, the 2024 Chicago House Music Festival will take place Sunday, June 2nd from 10am – 9pm featuring an incredible lineup of local and international DJs. Headlining the Jay Pritzker Pavilion are ***Tony Touch, ANANÉ, Ash Lauryn***, and ***Karizma*** performing before ***Wayne Williams*** and ***Alan King*** of the Chosen Few DJs.

On the North Promenade of the Park, **Slo 'Mo / Kido** hosts Queer Fam Pride Jam, a youth and queer family-friendly event with dance lessons, DJ sets and more from 10am-1pm, followed by ***Viva Acid*** presenting top local DJs until 9pm.

"House Music is a global phenomenon born and raised in Chicago 40 years ago, with roots that go back even further. Like Blues, Jazz, and Gospel that came before, House is our true cultural heritage as a city—it galvanizes Chicagoans, celebrates our diversity, innovation, and joy and invites the world to join in," shared Mayor Brandon Johnson.

The lineup of legendary House DJs and local talent will have audiences dancing throughout the first week of National Pride Month this June. For more information, visit ***ChicagoHouseMusicFestival.us.***

The Next Issue of GRAB hits the streets and online Tuesday June18th (Pride Issue) Reserve your space today 773-707-2660

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DCASE Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

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ChicagoHouseMusicFestival.us

DOWNTON ABBEY: THE EXHIBITION EXTENDS CHICAGO STAY DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND WITH NEW BRANDED MERCHANDISE

Based on public demand, Universal Live Entertainment and Imagine Exhibitions have announced the extension of the critically acclaimed Downton Abbey: The Exhibition at Westfield Old Orchard in Skokie, IL. Originally scheduled to conclude on March 31, 2024, the exhibition will now welcome visitors through July 7, 2024.

Tom Zaller, President & CEO of Imagine Exhibitions, commented, "We are overjoyed at the opportunity to extend the stay of Downton Abbey: The Exhibition in Chicago and could not be more thrilled with the overwhelming response from guests thus far. This extension and new features are a testament to the timeless appeal of Downton Abbey and the desire for immersive, elegant experiences."

Downton Abbey: The Exhibition offers a chance to step inside the world of the multi-award-winning global television phenomenon as well as the two previously released blockbuster feature films, produced by Carnival Films, which is part of Universal International Studios, a division of Universal Studio Group. Chicago marks the sixth U.S. stop of the exhibition's hugely popular U.S. tour. The exhibition was hailed by The New York Times as "a cleverly immersive experience mounted with the same exacting care as the show itself."

Downton Abbey: The Exhibition will continue to enchant guests at Westfield Old Orchard until July 7th, 2024. Tickets for the exhibition are available for purchase at ***www.downtonexhibition.com***

ON 112th ANNIVERSARY OF TITANIC'S SAILING, TITANIC: THE EXHIBITION EXTENDED BY POPULAR DEMAND!

By overwhelming public demand, the highly acclaimed Titanic: The Exhibition at Westfield Old Orchard in Skokie, IL has been extended through July 7th, 2024, providing more opportunities for guests to experience the interactive story like never before through the early summer months. Exhibition producer, Imagine Exhibitions, announces the extension following extraordinary ticket sales for the initial exhibition run dates with over 85,000 tickets sold from 42 states and 24 different countries, underpinning the timeless global fascination with the story of the Titanic.

The Exhibition is an interactive exhibition that tells the chronological and dramatic tale of the design, creation, launch, maiden voyage and tragedy of the largest and most luxurious ship in the world at that time. Guests will admire hundreds of artifacts that encompass items that survived the sinking of the Titanic and her sister ships, as well as props and recreations of the costumes from the beloved James Cameron 1997 blockbuster film Titanic. Set inside fully immersive re-creations of the ship's interior, the artifacts help navigate guests through Titanic's timeline from sinking to underwater discovery.

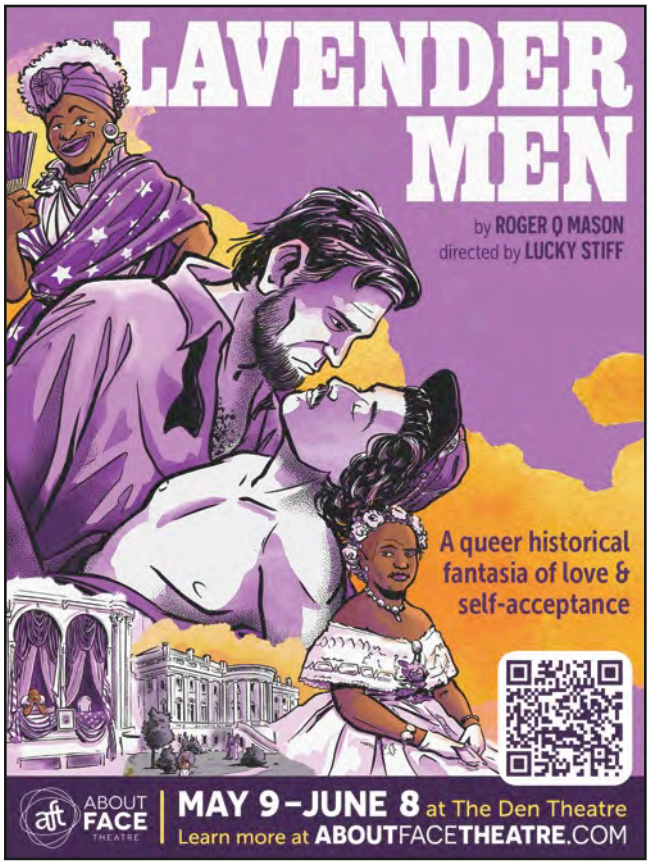
Once "aboard," visitors will receive a boarding pass corresponding with a passenger on the ship – allowing each guest to follow an individual passenger story as they explore the first, second, and third class galleries with their corresponding artifacts. The stories of love and loss culminate in the final galleries, showcasing personal effects and individual anecdotes surrounding a tribute wall where each passenger's fate is revealed.

Titanic Afternoon Tea

Hosted within the environment of the Titanic exhibition, this unique afternoon tea will offer guests an array of gourmet light bites, eclectic tea selections, and engaging Titanic trivia, enriching the immersive journey through history. The tea experience promises to transport visitors back in time, blending culinary delights with the rich tapestry of Titanic's story.

Music from the era plays throughout the exhibit as patrons examine incredibly detailed recreations of the ship's interiors including a two-story full-scale recreation of the ship's famous Grand Staircase, the first class hallway and millionaires suite, the third class hallway and cabin, the boiler room, and the ship exterior promenade deck complete with a starry night sky.

For more information, to purchase tickets, and to explore the world of Titanic: The Exhibition, visit ***https://thetitanicexhibition.com/***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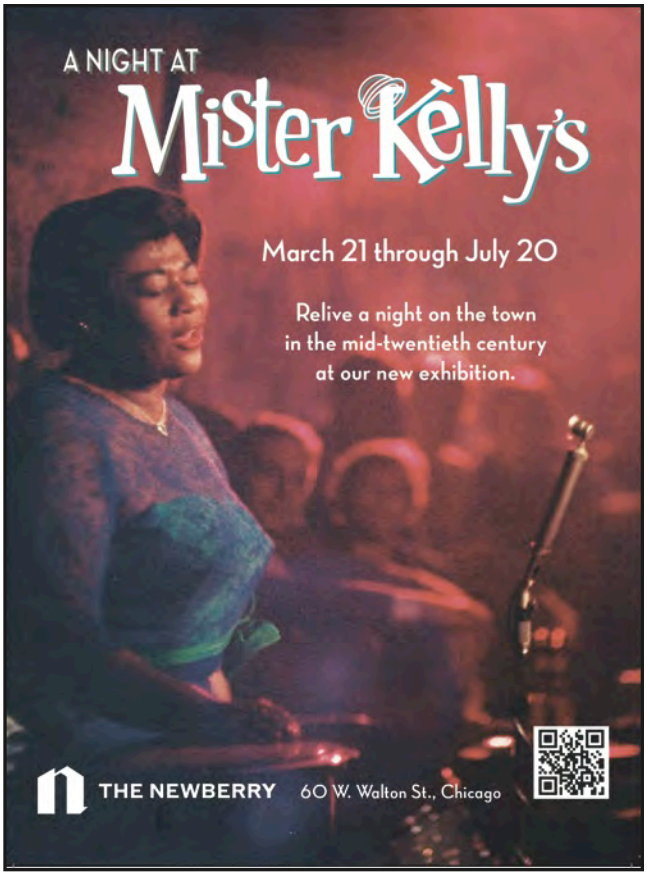
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MILWAUKEE PRIDEFEST JUNE 6 - 8

Wisconsin's largest LGBTQ+ event announces its festival headliners for the June 6-8, 2024, event. After two years of cancelations, PrideFest returned with back-to-back record-breaking attendance numbers in 2022 and 2023. This year marks the 36th edition of Pridefest; the event moved to the park in 1996. This year's festival will be a three-day event running Thursday-Saturday, June 6-8, 2024.

PrideFest's SKYYLine Mainstage is proud to welcome R&B, pop and hip-hop sensation ***Mya,*** American Idol favorite and pop culture phenom ***David Archuleta***, Swedish Synth-Pop duo ***Icona Pop***, rap artist ***Cupcakke***, "Murray's Misfits" Las Vegas Spectacular featuring five of Vegas' top illusionists, country up and comer Dixon Dallas and for Thursday night's top spot: an exclusive, curated for PrideFest showcase featuring RuPaul's iconic performers ***Alaska, Violet Chachki, and Envy Peru*** along with ***Ada Vox***, American Idol Season 16 alum.

Festival goers are encouraged to follow along on social media for daily updates and announcements as well as visiting ***www.pridefest.com***

OUTFRONT KALAMAZOO ANNOUNCES KALAMAZOO PRIDE 2024JUNE 7TH

OutFront Kalamazoo, one of Michigan's largest LGBTQ+ community centers, is excited to announce the dates for Kalamazoo PRIDE 2024.

Kalamazoo PRIDE 2024 is scheduled to take place on June 7 from 6:00 p.m. to midnight and on June 8 from noon to midnight. Bell's Brewery is returning as the event's Presenting Sponsor.

Last year's PRIDE festival was the largest event ever to be held at Arcadia Creek Festival Place, drawing thousands of attendees from all over Michigan and beyond. As OutFront Kalamazoo's largest annual fundraiser, the proceeds from this event allow the organization to provide vital programs and services to the LGBTQ+ community.

"We are honored to receive love and support in such abundance from our community each year," said Executive Director Tracy Hall. "Especially this year, as we are working diligently to build up our housing services and to address health disparities within our community."

The entertainment line-up is expected to include many notable artists, including globally-renowned Beyonce impersonator Riley Knoxx.

Tickets are available on the OutFront Kalamazoo website at ***https://www.outfrontkzoo.org/pride2024.***

OTTAWA, IL FAMILY PRIDE FEST JUNE 8th

The Ottawa Family Pride Fest on Saturday, June 8th is promising to be the most spectacular celebration that the Fund has put on so far. Having started in 2022, the Fest takes place in Downtown Ottawa, Illinois, just minutes outside of Starved Rock State Park, and runs from 10:00am to 4:00pm.

The Ottawa Family Pride Fest is a nonprofit festival, with proceeds raised going to benefit the Youth Outlook Ottawa Drop In Center, as well as toward the creation of the LaSalle County LGBTQ Community Center.

For more information, visit ***www.ottawafamilypridefest.org***

43rd PRIDE TORONTO FESTIVAL JUNE 27-30TH

Now, more than ever, the importance of coming together in celebrating Pride Festival 2024 cannot be overstated. Amid numerous global conflicts, violations of human rights both at home and abroad, and a distressing surge in hate crimes across the country, Pride Toronto stands as a beacon of celebration for the shared humanity and solidarity of individuals from all walks of life. It serves as a platform to highlight the ongoing prejudice faced by the diverse and intersecting members of the queer community and continues to advocate for the Human Rights of ALL 2SLGBTQI+ people. "As we prepare to celebrate the 2024 Pride Festival, we do so by acknowledging the ongoing challenges faced by 2SLGBTQI+ communities across Canada. Hate crimes against 2SLGBTQI+ communities are on the rise, and transphobic legislation, policies, and rhetoric are turning back the hard-fought progress that 2SLGBTQI+ people have achieved," said Grant Gonzales and leZlie lee kam, Co-Chairs, Board of Directors. "Pride is a symbol of and platform for our community's power to fight back against the surging hate and discrimination".

As the second-largest Pride festival in the world, Pride Toronto is a pillar of the city's major cultural summer events. Last year, it attracted an estimated 3 million attendees, contributing $589.8 million to the GDP and supporting the creation of 4,748 jobs. This year is expected to be even bigger! Throughout the month of June, it will showcase 700 performers, 13 stages, and 275 hours of programming. The renowned StreetFair on Church St, a weekend-long extravaganza, features over 200 vendors *For more information visit* ***http://www.pridetoronto.com***

Chicago Pridefest June 22- 23, 2024

Natasha Bedingfield, JoJo Siwa, Sapphira Cristál, Bob the Drag Queen, Amber Riley and Empress Of are headlining this year's Chicago Pride Fest®, taking place June 22nd and 23rd in the city's landmark LGBTQ+ Northalsted community.

More info and schedules at ***pridefestchicago.com.***

Chicago Pride Parade Sunday June 30th 11am

PRIDEChicago.org

CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 2024

CONTACT
Mayor's Press Office
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press@cityofchicago.org

CITY OF CHICAGO, LGBTQ+ ADVISORY COUNCIL, PRIDECHICAGO: PARADE ORGANIZERS JOINT STATEMENT ON 2024 PRIDE PARADE

CHICAGO – The City of Chicago has been engaged in a collaborative effort with the Mayor's Advisory Council on LGBTQ+ Affairs, Chicago Pride Parade organizers, the business community, residents, and multiple City agencies to develop a sustainable and accessible parade route for this year's Pride Parade. Through these conversations, we are thrilled to announce that 150 entries will participate in the Parade, allowing additional community organizations and schools to participate.

In addition, the Parade will begin an hour earlier than in previous years, starting at 11a.m. The Parade will kick off at Sheridan and Broadway, allowing for major arterial and side streets to be open for safety vehicles and traffic access, and to provide additional opportunities for spectators to flow to the east side of the route.

This collective endeavor reflects our shared commitment to fostering community engagement while ensuring an efficient allocation of resources. By prioritizing accessibility and sustainability, we aim to create an inclusive and vibrant celebration that enriches the fabric of our city while minimizing logistical strains.

The City is committed to deeper and more robust community engagement so that Pride can continue to honor the LGBTQ+ community's activism, visibility and achievements, and looks forward to staying committed to the LGBTQ+ community and celebrating Pride in 2024 and beyond.

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